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--7. (Amended) A method of treating a whole fish, wherein the whole fish is immersed in a solution of from 0.1 to 6.0% salt water at a temperature no greater than 10°C for a time of from 30 minutes to 24 hours before treating the whole fish according to the method of Claim 1.

8. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the aqueous alkaline solution has a pH of higher than 7.0.

9. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish are treated with the aqueous alkali solution from 1 minute to 24 hours at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C.

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11. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the time for the washing off of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is from 1 minute to 24 hours.

12. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises spraying the alkali-treated whole fish with an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.6.

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14. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises immersing the alkali-treated whole fish in an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.8.

16. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is performed during the course of boiling the whole fish in a solution of from 1 to 10% salt water by mass.

17. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising any one of the steps selected from the group consisting of treating the whole fish with salt water, boiling the whole fish, draining the whole fish, cooling the whole fish, directly packing the whole fish in bags, and combinations thereof after the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

18. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising
treating the whole fish with a solution comprising from 1 to 5% salt water for a time
from 10 minutes to 5 hours at a temperature not greater than 10°C;
washing the whole fish with water;
draining the whole fish; and
drying the whole fish
wherein the treating, washing, draining and drying is performed after the aqueous alkali
solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

19. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish is boiled at
a temperature from 90 to 100°C for a time of from 1 to 10 minutes.--

Please add the following claim.

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--27. (New) A method of preventing whole fish from browning or darkening, which comprises treating the whole fish with an aqueous alkali solution of a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof and then washing off or neutralizing the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish, wherein the whole fish originally has a white skin.--

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 7-9, 11-12, 14, and 16-19 are amended. Claim 27 is added. Support for the amendment to the claims is found at page 5, line 21, to page 24, line 11, of the specification and in the original claims. Support for Claim 27 is found at page 7, lines 9-20, of the specification and in the original claims. No new matter is believed to be introduced by the amendment.

REMARKS

Claim 27 is new. Claims 1-27 are pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

At the outset, Applicants thank Examiner Corbin for the courteous and helpful discussion of the present application held on July 16, 2002, and for indicating that the above amendment, combined with the remarks below, would further favorable prosecution of the present application.